

REMARKS

The Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application in the Office Action dated December 21, 2005. Claims 1-3, 6-8, 11-13, and 16-18 are pending. Claims 4, 5, 9, 10, 14, 15, 19, and 20 were previously canceled. By this amendment, claim 21 is canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter set forth therein. Claims 1 and 11 are independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Reasons for Entry of Amendments

At the outset, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered into the Official File in view of the fact that the amendments to the claims automatically place the application in condition for allowance. By this amendment, claim 21 is canceled. All other claims have been allowed by the Examiner.

In the alternative, if the Examiner does not agree that this application is in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered for the purpose of appeal. This Amendment was not presented at an earlier date in view of the fact that the Examiner has just now presented new grounds for rejection in this Final Office Action.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner states that claims 1-3, 6-8, 11-13, and 16-18 are allowed.

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Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claim 21 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kaneki et al (U.S. 6,568,402) in view of Aronoff et al. (U.S. 5,107,866). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

While not conceding the Examiner's rejection but merely to advance the prosecution of the present application, independent claim 21 has been canceled.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) are respectfully requested.

All pending claims are now in condition for allowance.

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CONCLUSION

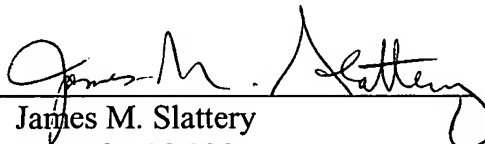
Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject claims, but merely to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 205-8000.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,
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